DATELINE #74 JACKSONVILLE, FLA APRIL 21, 1976
RUSSELL SPLANE

JACKSONVILLE SAYS YES TO O-P-S
(VOICED PIECE, INCLUDING INSERT IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS... DATELINE ...ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY, OUR DATELINE IS JACKSONVILLE, FLA. RUSSEL SPLANE REPORTS ON THE PROSPECTS -- AND PROBLEMS -- OF A PLAN THAT WOULD TAKE NUCLEAR POWER OUT TO SEA, IN ORDER TO SERVE THE PEOPLE ON LAND.

VOICE: THERE'S NOTHING NEW ABOUT NUCLEAR-FUELED ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANTS. ABOUT FIFTY ALREADY HAVE BEEN BUILT IN THE UNITED STATES. BUT CUSTOM MANUFACTURE OF SUCH PLANTS IS EXPENSIVE. SUITABLE LAND IS GETTING HARDER TO FIND AND IS BECOMING PROHIBITIVE IN PRICE. TIGHTENED REQUIREMENTS FOR SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MAKE IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN FEDERAL APPROVAL. AMPLE WATER FOR COOLING FREQUENTLY IS NOT AVAILABLE.

IN 1970, THE WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC COMPANY HAD AN IDEA IT BELIEVED WOULD SOLVE MOST OF THESE PROBLEMS, AT LEAST FOR COASTAL CITIES: MASS-PRODUCE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS -- IDENTICAL UNITS THAT COULD BE TURNED OUT ON AN ASSEMBLY LINE LIKE AUTOMOBILES. THIS WOULD DRASTICALLY REDUCE MANUFACTURING COSTS. PUT THESE UNITS ON FLOATING PLATFORMS THAT COULD BE TOWED TO THE PURCHASING CITY AND BE ANCHORED OFFSHORE BEHIND STRONG BREAKWATERS. THREATS TO THE ENVIRONMENT WOULD BE HELD TO A MINIMUM AND THERE'S BE PLENTY OF WATER AVAILABLE.

VOICE: (CONT'D) AND THERE WOULD BE NO LAND ACQUISITION COSTS. WESTINGHOUSE BEGAN LOOKING FOR A SUITABLE SITE TO SET UP AN ASSEMBLY PLANT FOR TURNING OUT THESE UNITS. AFTER A TWO-YEAR SEARCH, WESTINGHOUSE CHOSE JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA. THE CITY OFFERED TO SELL THE FIRM UP TO FOUR HUNDRED HECTARES OF LAND ALONG THE SAINT JOHNS RIVER, JUST A FEW KILOMETERS FROM THE ATLANTIC OCEAN. THE PROJECT, WHICH WESTINGHOUSE NAMED O-P-S -- FOR "OFFSHORE POWER SYSTEMS" -- WAS DULY LAUNCHED. JACKSONVILLE LOOKED FORWARD TO THE CREATION OF UP TO TWELVE THOUSAND NEW JOBS -- AN ECONOMIC BOON OF UNPRECEDENTED SCOPE. THE CITY OFFERED TO SET UP A NEW VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER TO TRAIN WORKERS. THE CITY ALSO AGREED TO BUY TWO OF THE GENERATING UNITS. AND A NEW JERSEY UTILITIES GIANT, HARD-PRESSED TO FIND ANY SUITABLE LAND IN THIS MOST DENSELY POPULATED OF EASTERN SEABOARD STATES, SIGNED A CONTRACT TO BUY FOUR.

BUT TODAY, THREE YEARS AFTER THIS AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING, NOT A SINGLE GENERATING UNIT HAS BEEN PRODUCED. OPPOSITION TO THE PLAN DEVELOPED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY IN JACKSONVILLE. SOME THOUGHT THE CITY WAS OFFERING TOO MUCH FOR WHAT IT WOULD GET. ENVIRONMENTALISTS JOINED THE FIGHT LED BY THE AUDUBON SOCIETY WHICH OBTAINED A COURT RESTRAINING ORDER. BUT MINORITY GROUPS -- SEEING THE PROSPECTS FOR MORE JOBS FADING -- BROUGHT A LAW SUIT CLAIMING THEIR INTERESTS WOULD BE DAMAGED IF THE PERMIT WAS NOT ISSUED.

VOICE: (CONT'D) SIGNS AND AUTOMOBILE BUMPER STICKERS PROCLAIMING, "SAY YES TO O-P-S" BEGAN TO APPEAR ALL OVER THE CITY. THE ATOMIC SAFETY AND LICENSING BOARD IS STILL HOLDING HEARINGS BUT THERE ARE HOPEFUL SIGNS THAT THE PERMIT WILL BE ISSUED.

MEANWHILE, O-P-S FOUND ITSELF FACING OTHER PROBLEMS. THE 1973 ARAB OIL EMBARGO, THE STRAINS OF THE RESULTING ENERGY CRISIS, AND THE NATION'S ECONOMIC RECESSION ALL COMBINED TO MAKE THE O-P-S IDEA SUDDENLY LESS ATTRACTIVE.

THE JACKSONVILLE ELECTRIC AUTHORITY CANCELLED ITS BID TO BUY TWO OF THE PLANTS. AND THE NEW JERSEY COMPANY ASKED THAT ITS CONTRACT FOR FOUR OF THE UNITS BE DEFERRED FOR FIVE YEARS.

BUT O-P-S THINKS ALL THIS IS ONLY A TEMPORARY SETBACK. IT'S STICKING TO ITS PLANS -- AND SO IS THE CITY. JACKSONVILLE MAYOR HANS TANZLER:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- TANZLER

"WHEN, AND I GUESS WE CAN SAY, IF -- I THINK IT IS STILL SOMEWHAT IFFY, BUT THE PLANS ARE TO PROCEED -- WHEN AND IF IN FULL OPERATION IT WILL HAVE AN ENORMOUS IMPACT ON THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT SEEMS TO ME, IN THIS ERA OF CONTINUED CONSUMPTION OF FOSSIL FUEL FOR ENERGY IN THE WORLD WE REALIZE WE MUST TURN TO SOME OTHER METHOD OF PRODUCING THAT ENERGY. FOSSIL FUEL IS LIMITED AND AS THE RECOGNITION OF THE INEVITABLE -- THAT IS, ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF PRODUCING FUEL -- BECOME MORE APPARENT TO THE NATION AND TO THE WORLD THEN THE DEMAND FOR NUCLEAR ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANTS WILL RISE."

VOICE: MAYOR HANS TANZLER OF JACKSONVILLE ON THE FUTURE OF O-P-S -- OFFSHORE POWER SYSTEMS. THIS IS RUSSELL SPLANE, VOICE OF AMERICA, JACKSONVILLE.

YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO DATELINE, THE WEEKLY VOICE OF AMERICA PROGRAM ON PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT ----- (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER... DATELINE.

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